

# johari window

## Ingham and Luft's Johari Window model diagrams and examples - for self-awareness, personal development, group development and understanding relationships

The Johari Window model is a simple and useful tool for illustrating and improving self-awareness, and mutual understanding between individuals within a group. The Johari Window model can also be used to assess and improve a group's relationship with other groups. The Johari Window model was devised by American psychologists Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955, while researching group dynamics at the University of California Los Angeles. The model was first published in the Proceedings of the Western Training Laboratory in Group Development by UCLA Extension Office in 1955, and was later expanded by Joseph Luft. Today the Johari Window model is especially relevant due to modern emphasis on, and influence of, 'soft' skills, behavior, empathy, cooperation, inter-group development and interpersonal development.

The Johari Window concept is particularly helpful to understanding employee/employer relationships within [the Psychological Contract](#).

Over the years, alternative Johari Window terminology has been developed and adapted by other people - particularly leading to different descriptions of the four regions, hence the use of different terms in this explanation. Don't let it all confuse you - the Johari Window model is really very simple indeed.

The Johari Window soon became a widely used model for understanding and training self-awareness, personal development, improving communications, interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, team development and inter-group relationships.

The Johari Window model is also referred to as a 'disclosure/feedback model of self awareness', and by some people an 'information processing tool'. The Johari Window actually represents information - feelings, experience, views, attitudes, skills, intentions, motivation, etc - within or about a person - in relation to their group, from four perspectives, which are described below. The Johari Window model can also be used to represent the same information for a group in relation to other groups. Johari Window terminology refers to 'self' and 'others': 'self' means oneself, ie, the person subject to the Johari Window analysis. 'Others' means other people in the person's group or team.

N.B. When the Johari Window model is used to assess and develop groups in relation to other groups, the 'self' would be the group, and 'others' would be other groups. However, for ease of explanation and understanding of the Johari Window and examples in this article, think of the model applying to an individual within a group, rather than a group relating to other groups.

The four Johari Window perspectives are called 'regions' or 'areas' or 'quadrants'. Each of these regions contains and represents the information - feelings, motivation, etc - known about the person, in terms of whether the information is known or unknown by the person, and whether the information is known or unknown by others in the group.

The Johari Window's four regions, (areas, quadrants, or perspectives) are as follows, showing the quadrant numbers and commonly used names:

## johari window four regions

1. what is known by the person about him/herself and is also known by others - **open area, open self, free area, free self, or 'the arena'**
2. what is unknown by the person about him/herself but which others know - **blind area, blind self, or 'blindspot'**
3. what the person knows about him/herself that others do not know - **hidden area, hidden self, avoided area, avoided self or 'facade'**
4. what is unknown by the person about him/herself and is also unknown by others - **unknown area or unknown self**

## johari quadrant 1 - 'open self/area' or 'free area' or 'public area', or 'arena'

Johari region 1 is also known as the 'area of free activity'. This is the information about the person - behaviour, attitude, feelings, emotion, knowledge, experience, skills, views, etc - **known** by the person ('the self') and **known** by the group ('others').

**The aim in any group should always be to develop the 'open area' for every person, because when we work in this area with others we are at our most effective and productive, and the group is at its most productive too. The open free area, or 'the arena', can be seen as the space where good communications and cooperation occur, free from distractions, mistrust, confusion, conflict and misunderstanding.**

Established team members logically tend to have larger open areas than new team members. New team members start with relatively small open areas because relatively little knowledge about the new team member is shared. The size of the open area can be expanded horizontally into the blind space, by seeking and actively listening to feedback from other group members. This process is known as 'feedback solicitation'. Also, other group members can help a team member expand their open area by offering feedback, sensitively of course. The size of the open area can also be expanded vertically downwards into the hidden or avoided space by the person's disclosure of information, feelings, etc about him/herself to the group and group members. Also, group members can help a person expand their open area into the hidden area by

asking the person about him/herself. Managers and team leaders can play an important role in facilitating feedback and disclosure among group members, and in directly giving feedback to individuals about their own blind areas. Leaders also have a big responsibility to promote a culture and expectation for open, honest, positive, helpful, constructive, sensitive communications, and the sharing of knowledge throughout their organization. Top performing groups, departments, companies and organizations always tend to have a culture of open positive communication, so encouraging the positive development of the 'open area' or 'open self' for everyone is a simple yet fundamental aspect of effective leadership.

## johari quadrant 2 - 'blind self' or 'blind area' or 'blindspot'

Johari region 2 is what is **known** about a person by others in the group, but is **unknown** by the person him/herself. By seeking or soliciting feedback from others, the aim should be to reduce this area and thereby to increase the open area ([see the Johari Window diagram below](#)), ie, to increase self-awareness. This blind area is not an effective or productive space for individuals or groups. This blind area could also be referred to as ignorance about oneself, or issues in which one is deluded. A blind area could also include issues that others are deliberately withholding from a person. We all know how difficult it is to work well when kept in the dark. No-one works well when subject to 'mushroom management'. People who are 'thick-skinned' tend to have a large 'blind area'.

Group members and managers can take some responsibility for helping an individual to reduce their blind area - in turn increasing the open area - by giving sensitive feedback and encouraging disclosure. Managers should promote a climate of non-judgemental feedback, and group response to individual disclosure, which reduces fear and therefore encourages both processes to happen. The extent to which an individual seeks feedback, and the issues on which feedback is sought, must always be at the individual's own discretion. Some people are more resilient than others - care needs to be taken to avoid causing emotional upset. The process of soliciting serious and deep feedback relates to the process of 'self-actualization' described in [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) development and motivation model.

## johari quadrant 3 - 'hidden self' or 'hidden area' or 'avoided self/area' or 'facade'

Johari region 3 is what is **known** to ourselves but kept hidden from, and therefore **unknown**, to others. This hidden or avoided self represents information, feelings, etc, anything that a person knows about him/self, but which is not revealed or is kept hidden from others. The hidden area could also include sensitivities, fears, hidden agendas, manipulative intentions, secrets - anything that a person knows but does not

reveal, for whatever reason. It's natural for very personal and private information and feelings to remain hidden, indeed, certain information, feelings and experiences have no bearing on work, and so can and should remain hidden. However, typically, a lot of hidden information is not very personal, it is work- or performance-related, and so is better positioned in the open area.

Relevant hidden information and feelings, etc, should be moved into the open area through the process of 'disclosure'. The aim should be to disclose and expose relevant information and feelings - hence the Johari Window terminology 'self-disclosure' and 'exposure process', thereby increasing the open area. By telling others how we feel and other information about ourselves we reduce the hidden area, and increase the open area, which enables better understanding, cooperation, trust, team-working effectiveness and productivity. Reducing hidden areas also reduces the potential for confusion, misunderstanding, poor communication, etc, which all distract from and undermine team effectiveness.

Organizational culture and working atmosphere have a major influence on group members' preparedness to disclose their hidden selves. Most people fear judgement or vulnerability and therefore hold back hidden information and feelings, etc, that if moved into the open area, ie known by the group as well, would enhance mutual understanding, and thereby improve group awareness, enabling better individual performance and group effectiveness.

The extent to which an individual discloses personal feelings and information, and the issues which are disclosed, and to whom, must always be at the individual's own discretion. Some people are more keen and able than others to disclose. People should disclose at a pace and depth that they find personally comfortable. As with feedback, some people are more resilient than others - care needs to be taken to avoid causing emotional upset. Also as with soliciting feedback, the process of serious disclosure relates to the process of 'self-actualization' described in [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) development and motivation model.

## Johari quadrant 4 - 'unknown self' or 'area of unknown activity' or 'unknown area'

Johari region 4 contains information, feelings, latent abilities, aptitudes, experiences etc, that are **unknown** to the person him/herself and **unknown** to others in the group. These unknown issues take a variety of forms: they can be feelings, behaviors, attitudes, capabilities, aptitudes, which can be quite close to the surface, and which can be positive and useful, or they can be deeper aspects of a person's personality, influencing his/her behaviour to various degrees. Large unknown areas would typically be expected in younger people, and people who lack experience or self-belief.

Examples of unknown factors are as follows, and the first example is particularly relevant and common, especially in typical organizations and teams:

- an ability that is under-estimated or un-tried through lack of opportunity, encouragement, confidence or training
- a natural ability or aptitude that a person doesn't realize they possess
- a fear or aversion that a person does not know they have
- an unknown illness
- repressed or subconscious feelings
- conditioned behavior or attitudes from childhood

The processes by which this information and knowledge can be uncovered are various, and can be prompted through self-discovery or observation by others, or in certain situations through collective or mutual discovery, of the sort of discovery experienced on outward bound courses or other deep or intensive group work. Counseling can also uncover unknown issues, but this would then be known to the person and by one other, rather than by a group.

Whether unknown 'discovered' knowledge moves into the hidden, blind or open area depends on who discovers it and what they do with the knowledge, notably whether it is then given as feedback, or disclosed. As with the processes of soliciting feedback and disclosure, striving to discover information and feelings in the unknown is related to the process of 'self-actualization' described in [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) development and motivation model.

Again as with disclosure and soliciting feedback, the process of self discovery is a sensitive one. The extent and depth to which an individual is able to seek out discover their unknown feelings must always be at the individual's own discretion. Some people are more keen and able than others to do this.

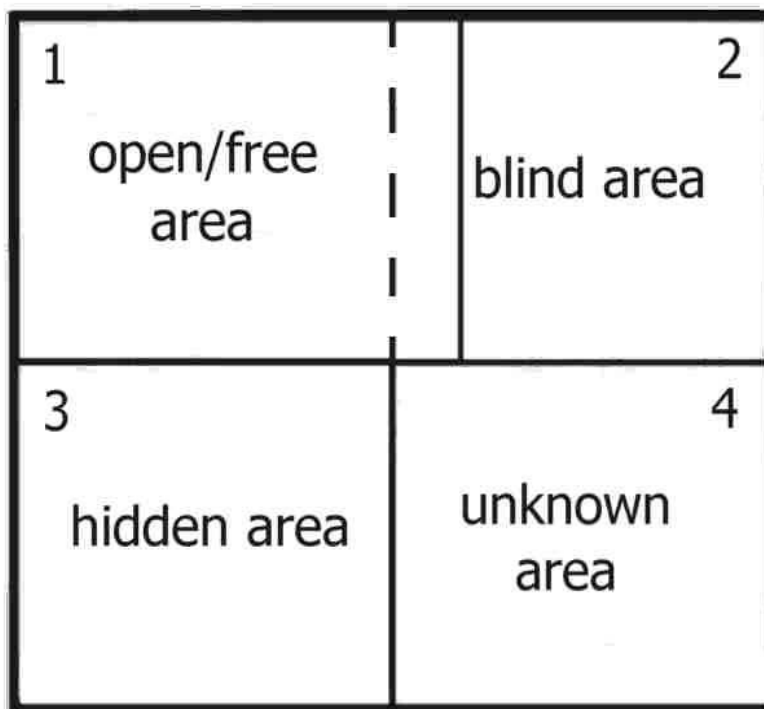
Uncovering 'hidden talents' - that is unknown aptitudes and skills, not to be confused with developing the Johari 'hidden area' - is another aspect of developing the unknown area, and is not so sensitive as unknown feelings. Providing people with the opportunity

to try new things, with no great pressure to succeed, is often a useful way to discover unknown abilities, and thereby reduce the unknown area.

Managers and leaders can help by creating an environment that encourages self-discovery, and to promote the processes of self discovery, constructive observation and feedback among team members. It is a widely accepted industrial fact that the majority of staff in any organization are at any time working well within their potential. Creating a culture, climate and expectation for self-discovery helps people to fulfil more of their potential and thereby to achieve more, and to contribute more to organizational performance.

A note of caution about Johari region 4: The unknown area could also include repressed or subconscious feelings rooted in formative events and traumatic past experiences, which can stay unknown for a lifetime. In a work or organizational context the Johari Window should not be used to address issues of a clinical nature. Useful references are Arthur Janov's seminal book *The Primal Scream* ([read about the book here](#)), and [Transactional Analysis](#).

## johari window example - increasing open area through feedback solicitation



This Johari Window model diagram is an example of increasing the open area, by reduction of the blind area, which would normally be achieved through the process of asking for and then receiving feedback.

Feedback develops the open area by reducing the blind area.

The open area can also be developed through the process of disclosure, which reduces the hidden area.

The unknown area can be reduced in different ways: by others' observation (which increases the blind area); by self-discovery (which increases the hidden area), or by mutual enlightenment - typically via group experiences and discussion - which increases the open area as the unknown area reduces.

A team which understands itself - that is, each person having a strong mutual understanding with the team - is far more effective than a team which does not understand each other- that is, whose members have large hidden, blind, and/or unknown areas.

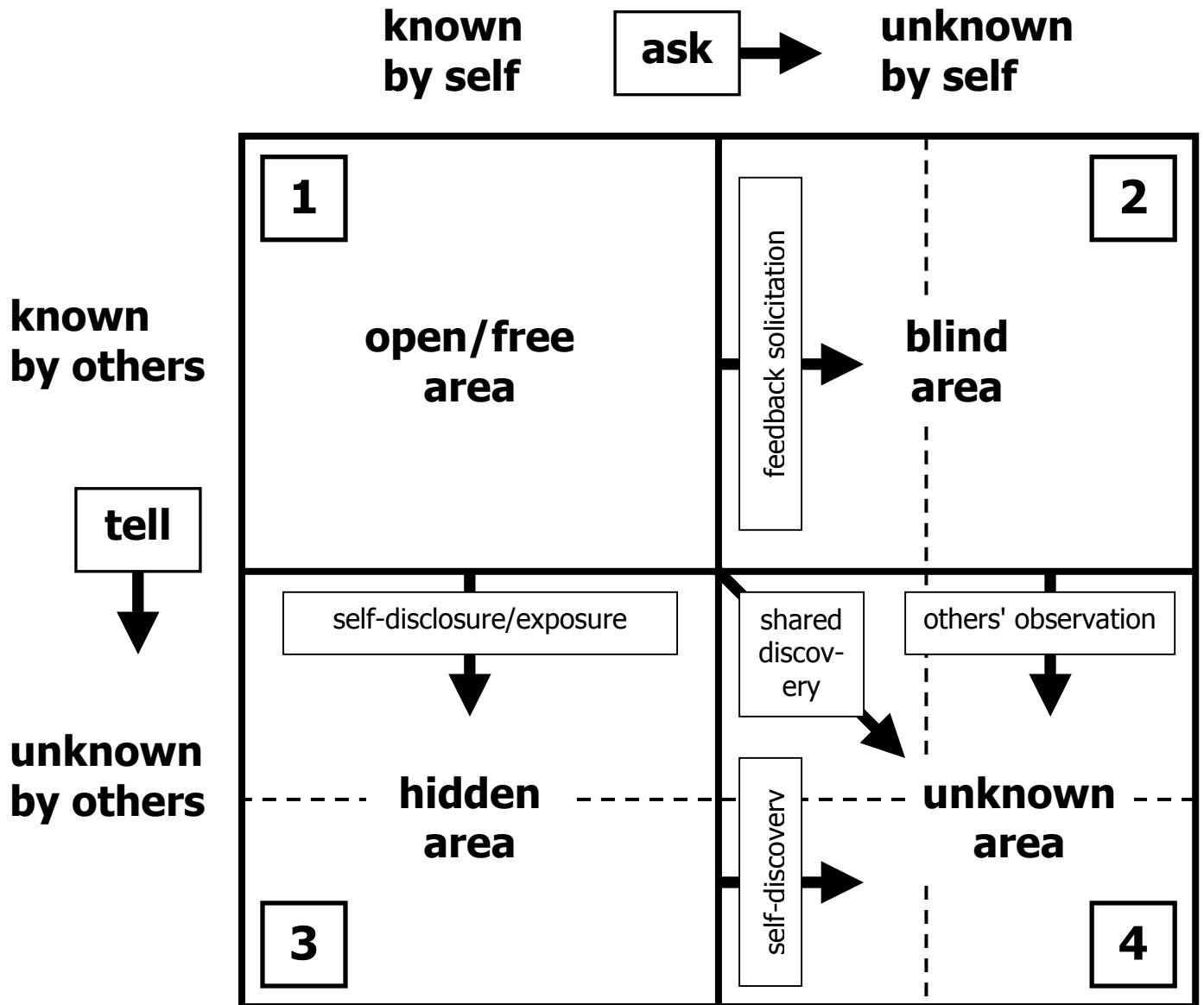
Team members - and leaders - should always be striving to increase their open free areas, and to reduce their blind, hidden and unknown areas.

A person represented by the Johari Window example below will not perform to their best potential, and the team will fail to make full use of the team's potential and the person's potential too. Effort should generally be made by the person to increase his/her open free area, by disclosing information about his/her feelings, experience, views, motivation, etc, which will reduce the size of the hidden area, and increase the open free area.

Seeking feedback about the blind area will reduce the blind area, and will increase the open free area. Discovery through sensitive communications, active listening and experience, will reduce the unknown area, transferring in part to the blind, hidden areas, depending on who knows what, or better still if known by the person and others, to the open free area.



# Johari Window model



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